BILINGUAL NEWSPAPER: A USEFUL TEACHING STRATEGY TO FOSTER THE HOME

CULTURE IN ESL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

Presently, it is known that language and culture are fundamental aspects that are worthy of being studied profoundly in foreign language classrooms. For that reason, this paper shows the importance of fostering cultural awareness in the English as a Second language (ESL) contexts using a useful teaching-learning strategy, a bilingual newspaper in two common languages, Spanish and English. This pedagogical resource allows English learners (EL) and English native speakers to foster their own culture within the whole school community equitably. Likewise, this project presents an example of the multiple benefits of implementing a new classroom project as the bilingual newspaper through cooperative learning and technological resources. In this sense, it is explained step by step how to create a digital newspaper through the Flipsnack and all the options that this alternative app offers. Finally, it is expected that teachers can give a better understanding of their learners how to become more tolerant of other people's cultural backgrounds and to avoid negative stereotypes. The main purpose is to build positive relationships with the community through educational activities that permanently fortify the communication and interactional process.

Dedication

      I want to dedicate this thesis to God for allowing me to have reached this important moment in my professional life; my family for being the most important pillar and always showing me their unconditional help, despite our physical distance I feel that they are always with me; my lovely husband, for believing in me and supporting me at any time because without your permanent love and support, I would not have achieved this goal.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Education is a fundamental process that helps determine the integral growth of people in different aspects of their life. As a Spanish-English bilingual teacher, working with many students and in different contexts, it has become profoundly clear to me how important it is to include culture in English as a second language (ESL) classrooms effectively. The home culture of the English learners (ELs) should have the same relevance as the culture of the target language, and both can be shared equitably in the educational context. As an educator, the focus is not only on transmitting knowledge, but it is to teach students to build positive relationships with people from diverse cultures through different classroom activities.

Teaching a second language implies more than teaching grammar structures, vocabulary, pragmatics, etc. Hol and Erarslan (2015) stated that "in the modern world, communicative competence includes more than the linguistic knowledge" (p. 331). It is important to recognize a close connection between culture and language and that valuing culture has a positive impact on students' learning and social interaction processes. Likewise, becoming familiar with our students' backgrounds will facilitate the communicative process between the school and home. It is essential to understand that language and culture create a bridge of communication. Herrera and Murry (2016) highlighted that teachers should "reinforce the value of [their] students' languages and cultures by familiarizing [themselves] with the original or native names of [their] students. . . [and] have CLD students teach [them] basic words in the native languages" (p. 8).

Also, recognizing cultural aspects will help to build positive relationships with our students and their families, who are a vital part of the learning and social process.

The relationship between teaching culture and language has been categorized as an essential aspect in the educational field because both jointly influence each other. The MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Language (2007) mentioned the importance of teaching these concepts in foreign contexts, and these have become a vital element in the 21st century. This committee emphasized that "culture is represented not only in events, texts, buildings, artwork, cuisines, and many other artifacts but also in language itself" (p. 236). This premise explains that culture influences second language acquisition because it allows the educational community to understand cultural diversity and its impact on teaching practices. It is known that culture is dynamic; it is a process of discovery; and it allows learners to build their cultural awareness through classroom interactions. Undoubtedly, teachers should incorporate as many cultural elements as possible in their classes based on the appropriate use of learners' identity and successful teaching experiences in ESL classrooms.

I have seen how the curricula emphasizes giving priority to the target culture, which is appropriate, but the home culture of EL learners should have equal status during the teaching-learning processes of a new language. I have noticed how ELs sometimes feel ashamed to share about their roots, which can cause a loss of their own identity. This loss could be due to the lack of opportunities to express their cultural background in the school context without any limitations. I do not intend to give a higher priority to L1 culture above another one; however, English instructors should address both language and culture in their lessons as a fundamental component of their classes. The educational community should be aware of the influence culture has on all learning environments and to try and adapt that culture in a way that supports the type

of environment that we believe will be the most effective for everyone. Incorporating socio-cultural aspects into our language classes will reinforce mutual communication between different communities and people from different nationalities in the classroom. This increases students' desire to learn and know more about their classmates' roots. They will understand that each person is valuable, and it is necessary to respect and be tolerant with the cultural diversity in the school. It is significant to include the cultural aspects in the educational context with visual aids, textbooks, and classroom activities to immerse learners in-home and target cultures step-by-step without overwhelming them. For that reason, I realized that it is necessary to provide useful strategies for teachers through which they can foster cultural awareness as a focus of their classes. Specifically, in ESL classrooms, teaching the culture of our EL learners should become a vital component of the second language acquisition process.

Considering the reasons for reinforcing the home culture of EL learners with the whole educational community, the project, bilingual newspaper, allows ELs to share their culture in a different and dynamic way. Although the paper could be published in different languages, because of my student population, it is in Spanish and English. This project is focused on upper-level students (high school) because at this age, students are more aware of their backgrounds, and they have enough knowledge about their traditions, costumes, and own identities as well. It is essential to clarify that this newspaper is developed digitally, considering that they are immersed in the virtual world at that age.

Furthermore, there are multiple advantages to designing a bilingual newspaper. It allows students to make meaningful collaborative contributions in order to develop their autonomy, and it also requires creative work and critical analysis. For instance, Spanish native speakers will work with another native English speaker, reflecting that code-switching has a relevant role

during the development of the project. Creativity will be reinforced where learners have the opportunity to demonstrate their language and academic skills as well. The guidance and supervision of their teachers are fundamental. It will help them to accomplish the objective, and the cooperation of their families in some tasks will be necessary. It reflects that it is a collaborative work in which students, families, and teachers can contribute to developing the project successfully. Bilingual education programs enhance learners' language skills effectively. Educators can understand that it is possible to create more global, connected, and open-minded classes through activities that catch students' attention and reinforce their social interactions in a multicultural context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Teaching or learning a second language involves understanding vocabulary, grammar rules, accents, and more. Simultaneously, language learning is highly related to a strong connection between culture and language which, in turn, influences students' academic and social performance. Cultural aspects play an essential role in learning a second language because of the link between language and culture. Ahamdpour and Kuhi (2019) revealed that teaching culture has a positive impact on teaching communicative skills because speakers become competent in a foreign language. Yang and Chen (2015) argued that culture is a dynamic process that allows learners to build their own cultural knowledge.

Additionally, it is known that the learning of both the grammar and cultural components of a target language is positively connected to students' language proficiency. Sun (2013) stated that language is influenced by culture, and it is undeniable that each aspect cannot work in an isolated way. Gee (2007 as cited in Johnson, 2012) pointed out that " cultural processes are passed from one group to the next in which the group ensures that everyone learns the process" (p. 20). This suggests that new English learners need to realize the importance of the cultural aspect in their language learning and interactional process.

This literature review aims to explain the strong relationship between language and culture by defining both aspects and how they are interrelated. In addition, I will explore the issues surrounding the relevance of raising cultural awareness in English language classrooms

and the different teaching strategies where ELs can foster their home culture and the target culture in second language contexts. Lastly, I will discuss the role of code-switching and the multiple advantages of implementing this linguistic feature in English classrooms which will serve as a useful, innovative, and educational resource in the bilingual newspaper design.

The Relationship between Language and Culture

First of all, to understand the close link between language and culture, it is indispensable to comprehend the definition of each aspect from diverse experts. Hol and Erarslan (2015), in their research, showed the definition of culture from different participants' perceptions. The first one, culture, is a collection of experiences that society has gained during the time, and it is a vital part of a specific community. Second, culture is an accumulation of behaviors, thoughts, traditions, and how individuals behave. Lastly, culture is the irreplaceable structure of a society (Hol & B Erarslan, 2015). Similarly, Peregoy and Boyle (2013) noted that "culture comprises three essential aspects: what people know and believe, what people do, and what people make and use. Culture, therefore, serves to ensure group cohesion and survival. Every child is instinctive into the culture of a particular group" (p. 12). Likewise, the authors added that human beings have been born with a unique culture representing their identity and, through time, and rearing becomes something innate for everyone in that culture.

Lado (1964 as cited in Zahra, et al., 2017), proclaimed that "culture provides patterns that are necessary for communication and interaction in social life. Culture comes from patterned behaviors, such as thinking, talking, and feeling and acting; these uniformed patterns differentiate patterns differentiate one society from another one" (p.162). In the same manner, Galloway (1992) described culture as a powerful human characteristic where the different

members of a society share an identity which determines behavioral patterns. Samovar (2004) encompassed culture with different components such as history, religion, social organization, values, and language. Additionally, Samovar (2004) provided a clear description of these aspects, explaining that "history is handed down from generation to generation, religion influences culture, values help determines how people ought to behave, social organization help members of the culture organize their lives and lastly, language allows members to communicate with one other" (p. 18).

Language and culture are implicitly connected, and they are an essential part of the learning process of a second language. Sun (2013) defined language as "the primary vehicle by which a culture transmits beliefs, values, and norms. Secondly, language is influenced by culture. Language is one of the most important carriers of culture and reflects the latter" (p. 371). Sun (2013) explained that culture involves three aspects. Firstly, culture is related to customs, traditions, habits of daily life, and the way of communication within a community. Secondly, culture is related to psychology through the influence of their cultural patterns on their behavior and interaction with other individuals. Finally, culture is part of the historical background, which refers to the development that culture has over time.

Lanch (1998 as cited in Yang & Chen, 2016) associated language and culture as an aspect that complements each one to another one. Language and culture are a medium for comprehension and negotiating meaning for all characteristics of cultural patterns, which are vital in the communication process. Equally important, Lanch (1983) and Yang et al. (2016), stressed that "instructors who believe that culture is dynamic, rather than a static, entity would probably view the teaching culture as a process of discovery and construction and encourage students to construct their own cultural knowledge" (p. 1129). This quotation states that culture

cannot be stagnant, and it must be adapted to the historical and social variations in the context. Therefore, cultural dynamics are in permanent change in society, education in terms of knowledge, activities, interests, customs, and advances of all kinds.

Brown (2007 as cited in Zahra et al., 2017) has argued that culture and language are undoubtedly interwoven and interrelated in the teaching and learning processes. Brown (2007) and Zahra et al. (2017), also concurred that when learners attempt to develop a new language or culture, they are creating new identities and attitudes simultaneously. In addition, Norton and Gao (2008) remarked that spending valuable time on the target language reflects investing time in identity, specifically in second language contexts. Buttjes (1990) highlighted that language and culture are linked by different reasons. Firstly, languages vary across cultures, and being competent in a language involves the interchange of language within sociocultural contexts. In addition, the family's role is crucial for providing effective input to children as they develop their oral skills. Nadera (2012) exemplified this dynamic of the language and culture relationship in daily life how people greet others; the variation in different countries and languages is notable. For instance, in Asian cultures, people join their hands as a prayer position and sometimes kiss each other. On the contrary, American women and men wait to extend their hands to greet when they meet for the first time.

Moreover, in foreign language contexts, Tomalin (2008, as cited in Ghafor 2020), has categorized culture as a fifth language skill as an essential component in the language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) due to two meaningful reasons: the international role of the English language and globalization. Furthermore, he expanded his argument, conveying that "the fifth language skill teaches you the attitudes and techniques to adjust your use of

English to learn, understand and appreciate the values, ways of doing things and unique qualities of other cultures" (p. 72).

Cultural Awareness

Diversity in today's classrooms has made the term *cultural awareness* of the utmost important. Baker (2011) stated that cultural awareness (CA) is a conscious understanding where the culture has a relevant role in the learning and communication processes for both home and second languages. Baker (2011) supported this claim by stating that "CA also stresses the need for learners to become aware of the culturally based norms, beliefs, and behaviors of their own culture and other cultures" (p. 4). Dolidze (2016) suggested that educators should give learners sufficient opportunities to identify and explore cultural diversity in the classroom. Continuing with this point of view, Dolidze (2016) emphasized the necessity of raising cultural awareness in both the learners' own and the target culture equally.

According to Tomlinson (2001, as cited in Tzotzou & Kotsiou, 2015), cultural awareness is associated with equality and recognition of one's own roots and how cultures can connect intrinsically despite their differences. Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004, as cited in Tzotzou & Kotsiou, 2015) supported this idea by claiming that fostering cultural awareness in the classroom will encourage learners to be more tolerant and respectful and will create an inclusive, positive educational environment for everyone. "Cultural awareness encompasses three qualities: awareness of one's own culturally induced behavior, awareness of the culturally induced behavior of others and ability to explain one's own cultural standpoint" (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993, p. 70).

Strategies to Foster Cultural Awareness in ESL Classrooms

As teachers of a second language, we are responsible for teaching the language correctly and teaching cultural components dynamically. It is vital to consider students' attitudes toward those cultural aspects of the target language without forgetting their home language. Frank (2013) has revealed meaningful cultural features through the 3P model which includes: perspectives (members' cultural perspectives), practices (how is the member's interaction with others), and products (the different cultural things members can share). Frank (2013) added to the discussion a useful teaching strategy called informants, which means to encourage native speakers or non-native speakers of English to share with the whole class a particular aspect of their own culture. Oxford (1994) stated that "the target culture should be viewed in the context of other cultures. Comparisons and contrasts are valuable and should be encouraged, along with deeper probing for the similarities among cultures" (p. 35). Specifically, Oxford (1994) suggested that language teachers should create spaces where learners can expose their own points of view about diverse cultures' differences and particularities.

Educators can also self-reflect about the importance of diversity in the classroom. Solano advised that "The first step to become a strong promoter of cultural matters in the language classroom is to start by reflecting on one's own preconceptions about culture" (Solano, 2009, p.385). Furthermore, Solano (2009) recommended that teachers deeply self-evaluate their own cultural beliefs carefully before including them in their lessons or before choosing the different cultural activities to be developed by the learners. Herrera and Murry (2016) outlined that educators should value the cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom because it will enrich all students' learning performance.

Valdes (1987) explained that "not only similarities and contrasts in the native and target languages have been useful as teaching tools but when the teacher understands cultural similarities and contrasts and applies that knowledge to teaching practices, they too become advantageous learning tools" (as cited in Shemshadsara, 2012, p. 98). Winstead and Wang (2017), in their study, showed the importance of keeping the home language. The data clearly laid out that primary language preservation is necessary because it is entwined with the issues of familial and academic support and the need to maintain permanent contact with other native speakers. These interactions will make learners proud to use their native language. Likewise, Winstead and Wang (2017) explained the participants' answers about the advantages of being a bilingual person specifically a Spanish -English speaker " particular teachers valued their language and culture expertise as well as commented about instances in which primary language was used to help students in the classroom" (p. 21).

DelliCarpini et al. (2009) stressed a teaching strategy in which teachers need to be actively involved in students' lives (newcomer population), knowing their socio-cultural, familial, and literacy backgrounds in order to raise the communication competence of the whole community. Bakhshi et al. (2018) concurred with that point of view, explicitly referring to this specific population of newcomers, "teachers should be given preparation time and resources to get to know their incoming newcomer students. This includes information about their home country situation, cultural values, first language, family situation, and prior schooling" (p. 1). Additionally, Bakhshi et al. (2018) claimed that teachers should boost diversity awareness by developing a culturally responsive classroom in an inclusive and positive environment based on tolerance and respect for all educational community members. However, Bakhshi et al. (2018)

criticized some educators' perceptions who do not have enough information about their students' backgrounds and lives, affecting the building of a confident relationship.

The Role of Code-Switching

The term *code-switching* has been implemented as a helpful strategy in which speakers use varieties of languages for facilitating their communicative process. Kharkhurin and Wei (2015), in their research, associated code-switching (CS) as an aspect of bilingualism and a combination of different languages in speaking production. Furthermore, Kharkhurin and Wei (2015) clarified that not all bilingual speakers use code-switching and not all code-switchers change their languages; it depends on the situations and the reasons to use the languages. Kharkhurin and Wei (2015) connected the familial role as an important key in using code-switching in different contexts. Kharkhurin and Wei (2015) explained that "There are bilinguals who were born into bilingual families and communities where CS is the norm. For others, CS is a learned skill; they only do so in specific contexts, for specific reasons, and with specific interlocutors" (p. 2).

Moreover, Kharkhurin and Wei (2015) in their study, indicated that sociolinguists determined that CS is connected to bilingual creativity expressing "those creative linguistic processes, which are the result of competence in two or more languages. For example, the designing of a text that uses linguistic resources from two or more related or unrelated languages" (p. 2). Bhatia and Ritchie (2008 as cited in Kharkhuri & Wei, 2015) provided different aspects of bilingual creativity in CS which involves the verbal behavior of the bilingual speaker and the creative capacity of the bilingual brain to work integrally and separately. Last, Kharkhurin and Wei (2015) inferred that the role of code-switching is highly related to creative

thinking, and it is a called for educators to develop strategies to foster CS in multilingual classrooms to support and extend the cognitive skills of learners effectively.

Grosjean (1982 as cited in Azlan & Narasuman, 2013) defined code-switching as "the shifting that occurs between two or more languages simultaneously or interchangeably within one conversation" (p. 458). However, Sert (2015 as cited in Azlan & Narasuman, 2013) pointed out a reason for not using code-switching in the classroom. Some English educators prefer to obey the established rules in the second language process strictly. English learners must speak only the target language to achieve high standards in the target language. Taha (2008 as cited in Azlan & Narasuman, 2013) concurred with this idea in which some teachers and Arabian students involved in the study of code-switching stated that "alternation between English and Arabic in the classroom should be discouraged and that all members of the classroom were obligated to use the medium of instruction designated for the study" (p. 459).

Malika (1994 as cited in Azlan & Narasuman, 2013) exposed significant reasons for the use of code-switching communicatively in the classroom setting. Firstly, it is related to *lack of facility* in which bilingual or multilingual speakers need to code-switch some words when they do not find the most appropriate term in L2 matches their native language. Secondly, *the speaker's mood* refers to the speakers' attitude, in which the learners show a signal about the kind of language they will use. Lastly, *showing identity with a group,* explains that a person demonstrates a positive attitude with others with the purpose to create an appropriate relationship. Azlan and Narasuman (2013) illustrated that "it is the same when an instructor code-switches in the classroom in order to build solidarity and associate in friendly relations with the students" (p. 460). Last, *to address a different audience* is a demonstration of welcoming

toward someone new in a communicative experience or with an individual with similar linguistic background.

Arumugam et al. (2017) argued *code-switching* as method in which bilingual or trilingual students switch from their first language to another second language to facilitate the interchange of information. Cook (2001 as cited in Aramugan et al., 2017) stressed code -switching as "a natural learning process especially in a bilingual academic setting. He also added that bilingual or trilingual learners prefer this mode of discussion as they are at ease as they codeswitch as they need" (p.122). Canagarajah (2005) and Kow (2003) and Cook (2001) highlighted that "code-switching among the ESL learners played an extremely crucial role as it was designed to cultivate inter-lingual unity, convey precise meaning and communication […] develop means to serve the learners to appropriate their language skills and to fulfil these needs" (as cited in Aramugam et al., 2017, p. 122). Likewise, Amin (2009 as cited in Aramugam et al., 2017) highlighted that code-switching does not imply only a mixture of languages, but it is linked to the proper usage of the native language, allowing learners to make comparisons in each language.

Another aspect to be considered is how code-switching works in the wring process. Escamilla (2007) conducted a study that showed meaningful findings of the written code-switching in children. On one side, code-switching was not used due to a lack of knowledge in the two languages. Instead, the children in the study had been living in bilingual environments in which they only communicated for necessity. On the second side, Escamilla (2007) further mentioned that "they learn and employ strategies to express themselves in writing in Spanish and English, they utilize these strategies across languages, and frequently employ multiple cross-language strategies in their writing" (p. 8). Furthermore, children are immersed in two different

worlds, and they know how to implement the two languages appropriately to avoid linguistic misunderstandings.

Ferguson (2009 as cited in Hussein et al., 2020) explained that, clarifying unclear information, greetings, and the interactional process as the most relevant code-switching functions in the classroom context. Jingxia (2010) found considerable reasons to use code-switching in the Chinese classrooms to (1) translate unfamiliar words, (2) explain grammar, (3) manage a class, (4) display sympathy and friendship to students, (5) shift topics, (6) get students' concentration, and (7) assess their understanding (p. 63). Likewise, Hussein et al. (2020), in their research, provided a strong description of teachers' and students' perceptions of code-switching in the school setting. The reasons for code-switching encompassed affective purposes, to facilitate the teaching-learning processes, clarification-translation of the content, and appropriate classroom management. Similarly, Edmonson (2004 as cited in Mameri & Chaira, 2016) concurred that "teachers use code-switching to indicate the starting or the ending point of the lesson, to exercise discipline, to give announcement or instruction, to create friendly relationship with learners and treat them as individuals rather than only learners" (p. 12).

There are four reasons to implement code-switching in second language classrooms. First, code-switching is essential because it offers enough input in both languages to the learners. Second, it helps students to infer the different content shown during the instruction. Third, learners will understand that the two languages have the same equivalence; any language does not have more prevalence above another (Jacobson, 1983 as cited in Nordin et al., 2013). Sert (2005) emphasized that "the teacher uses code-switching in order to build solidarity and intimate relations with the students. In this sense, one may speak of the contributions of code-switching for creating a supportive language environment in the classroom" (p. 3). Sert (2005) explained

meaningful reasons for the benefits of incorporating code-switching in ESL classrooms. For instance, this effective teaching strategy will facilitate the development of the bilingual newspaper for Spanish and English speakers, and the relationship between teacher and learners will reinforce positively.

　　　To sum up, the research shown in this project is a call for educators to renew their teaching practices by implementing cultural and innovative activities in the classroom. An example is evident in integrating the language and culture of L1- L2 elements in the bilingual newspaper design. The whole school community can be part of fostering cultural awareness permanently.

Chapter 3: Project Design

In this chapter, I describe the importance of effectively incorporating alternative educational projects that foster the home culture, in English second language settings. Specifically, a bilingual newspaper (Spanish- English) is a helpful teaching-learning strategy that allows English learners to share their socio-cultural heritage with the whole educational community. I will also provide further information about the innumerable benefits of implementing this valuable pedagogical tool. One of these benefits is the reinforcement of cooperative learning because the newspaper will be developed by learners from two different cultures (Spanish and English speakers). Second, I will emphasize the appropriateness of the improvement of language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) and cultural awareness in both languages.

Cooperative learning promotes better student performance, as students can learn the importance of working with others. Heath (2010) pointed out that in "cooperative learning groups students discuss materials, help each other to understand the materials, and encourage each other to do their best. The teacher performs individual assessments to ensure that all students are learning" (p. 25). In the same way, Heath (2010) explained that cooperative learning in the classroom, at any level, is undoubtedly a fundamental method through which students can interact with each other and achieve a common goal. Johnson and Johnson (1999, as cited in Heath, 2010) concurred that for effective cooperative learning students should work collectively to accomplish the same academic objectives and optimize their own classmates' performance. DelliCarpini (2009) provided a similar definition of cooperative learning (CL) by describing "CL

as an alternative to traditional, competitive classrooms. In cooperatively structured activities groups of students work together to accomplish a well-defined, shared goal" (p. 43).

In terms of second language classrooms, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that "CL fosters the use of authentic language in a meaningful context. Students are engaged in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in order to accomplish a shared task, and students adjust their language to facilitate comprehensibility, us[ing] developmentally appropriate language" (as cited in, DelliCarpini, 2009 p. 44). Johnson and Johnson (1999, as cited in DelliCarpini, 2009) stated that CL works as a positive support including significant aspects such as positive independence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, social skills, and group processing. DelliCarpini (2009) added that CL provides students spaces where they can interchange valuable information, allowing them to consider their classmates' different points of view, and encouraging meaningful input for their second language acquisition.

Additionally, bilingual newspapers offer a variety of benefits that integrate language skills simultaneously. Wilson and Barnes (1975, as cited in Lin, 2015) argued that incorporating diverse teaching resources, such newspapers, will support learners' reading skills at any grade level, motivating them to actively increase their reading habits. Ernst-Slavit, Moore, and Maloney (2002, as cited in Lin, 2015) supported this idea stating that "the research from the 1980s to 1990s confirms that the more a first language is used as a support vehicle, combined with appropriate second language development, the more ELLs achieve academic success in the second language" (p. 10). Likewise, Bernhardt (1993, as cited in Lin, 2015) agreed that a bilingual newspaper is a significant part of reading literacy due to the fact that home language (L1) works as a supportive bridge through which learners can enhance their reading proficiency skills in the target language (L2) satisfactorily.

Another reason for creating a bilingual newspaper is the necessity for engaging learners to participate in dynamic activities to reinforce both their language skills and their cultural backgrounds. Lin (2015) outlined that "bilingual newspapers have been deemed not only a local news outlet but also a medium to intensify minorities' openness to acceptance of life and inclusion in their existing society" (p. 9). In the same manner, this project intends to provide educators with teaching alternatives to actively foster cultural awareness in ESL contexts. Dolidze (2016) presented a clear example describing that " strategies for culture learning include having students learn about a culture from native informants, develop their cultural observation skills and learn about the culture through authentic materials associated with that culture" (p. 263). For that reason, it is fundamental to utilize a variety of activities through which students can learn about other cultures and reinforce their own roots equitably.

Undoubtedly, there are strong reasons to design a bilingual newspaper that jointly encompasses language and culture. The bilingual newspaper design must contain specific parameters. For instance, it can be printed or digital; but if it is created electronically, the students can use diverse online resources. The newspaper must be both in English and Spanish, and educators and learners must define which topics catch their attention more (cultural aspects). Equally important is the teachers' role. Teachers must supervise and guide students during the project's development. Additionally, English and Spanish native speakers must work together for the benefit of the newspaper and value each other's contributions and suggestions in order for the newspaper to be successful. Finally, I am confident that through this innovative activity in ESL classrooms, the learners will feel motivated to express their heritage roots, strengthen relationships, and improve their language skills through meaningful and collaborative spaces.

Chapter 4: Final Project

The following bilingual newspaper (Spanish-to-English) offers educators a helpful teaching strategy for integrating cultural information and technology into their English as a second language (ESL) classrooms. Additionally, this project's development offers an opportunity for learners to reinforce their cooperative learning, communicative, and language skills. In addition, the newspaper could be digital or printed depending on school resources, student background, and/or pedagogical purposes.

Creating this project seeks to teach more than broad and concerted teamwork. For instance, learners will also extend their socio-cultural knowledge and share their backgrounds as in the course of working on the paper. Krajka, Batory, and Mickiewicz (2000) explained that online newspapers work as extra support, helping students be more aware of cultural differences. Teachers can organize the corresponding workgroup and assign them a particular topic to be researched and exposed in the newspaper. Consequently, they learn that although everyone is different, there are no limitations to exploring other countries (customs and cultures), which suggests that they will gradually become aware that we can all live together despite our differences. Students also improve both oral and written expression and comprehension, according to their specific language level. Lastly, they enrich their work techniques, such as developing ideas, writing summaries, conducting interviews, researching papers, and accurately and carefully organizing reports.

It is fundamental to consider specific aspects of the newspaper before beginning to facilitate its design. First, choosing the newspaper's name motivates students and teachers to work collaboratively. Second, it is essential to decide which topics will be shown in the newspaper to capture the readers' attention. Third, students can select the most relevant information (photos, personal experiences, etc.) and organize the newspaper sections considering their classmates' different perspectives. These features will allow learners to participate actively and develop critical thinking and language skills.

Presently, new technologies have developed numerous virtual resources to support and achieve the objectives in school environments. There are sites for creating digital newspapers such as Issuu, crayon, Flipsnack, and Makemynewspaper or templates in Google that are easy to edit. However, it is necessary to consider that some of them require a paid subscription. For that reason, I decided to show a clear example of a digital newspaper in Flipsnack that allows educators to have a guide to include this kind of project in their curriculum. The bilingual newspaper can be created in the order that follows simple steps.

The first one is to go to https://www.flipsnack.com/ select **"try for free"** (See Figure 4.1)
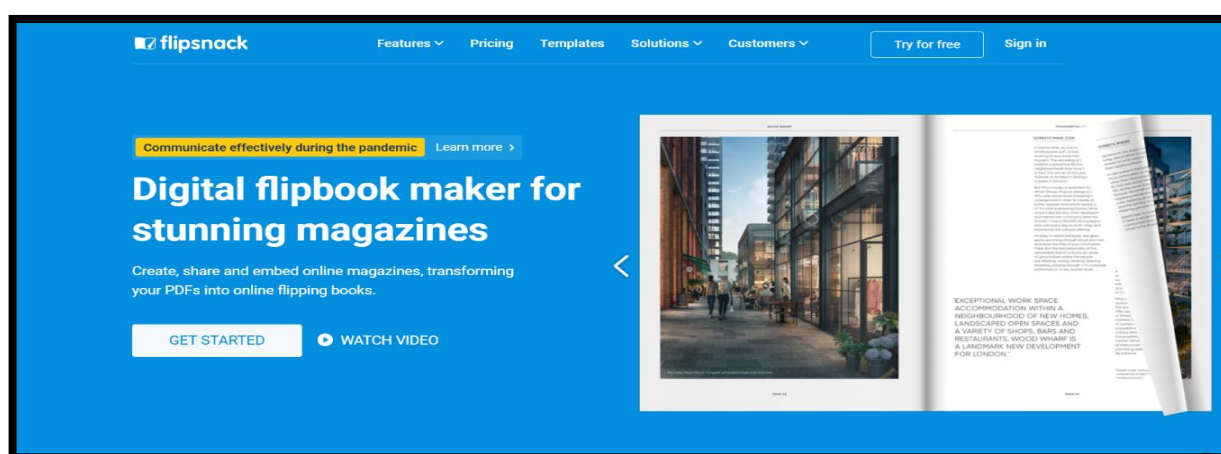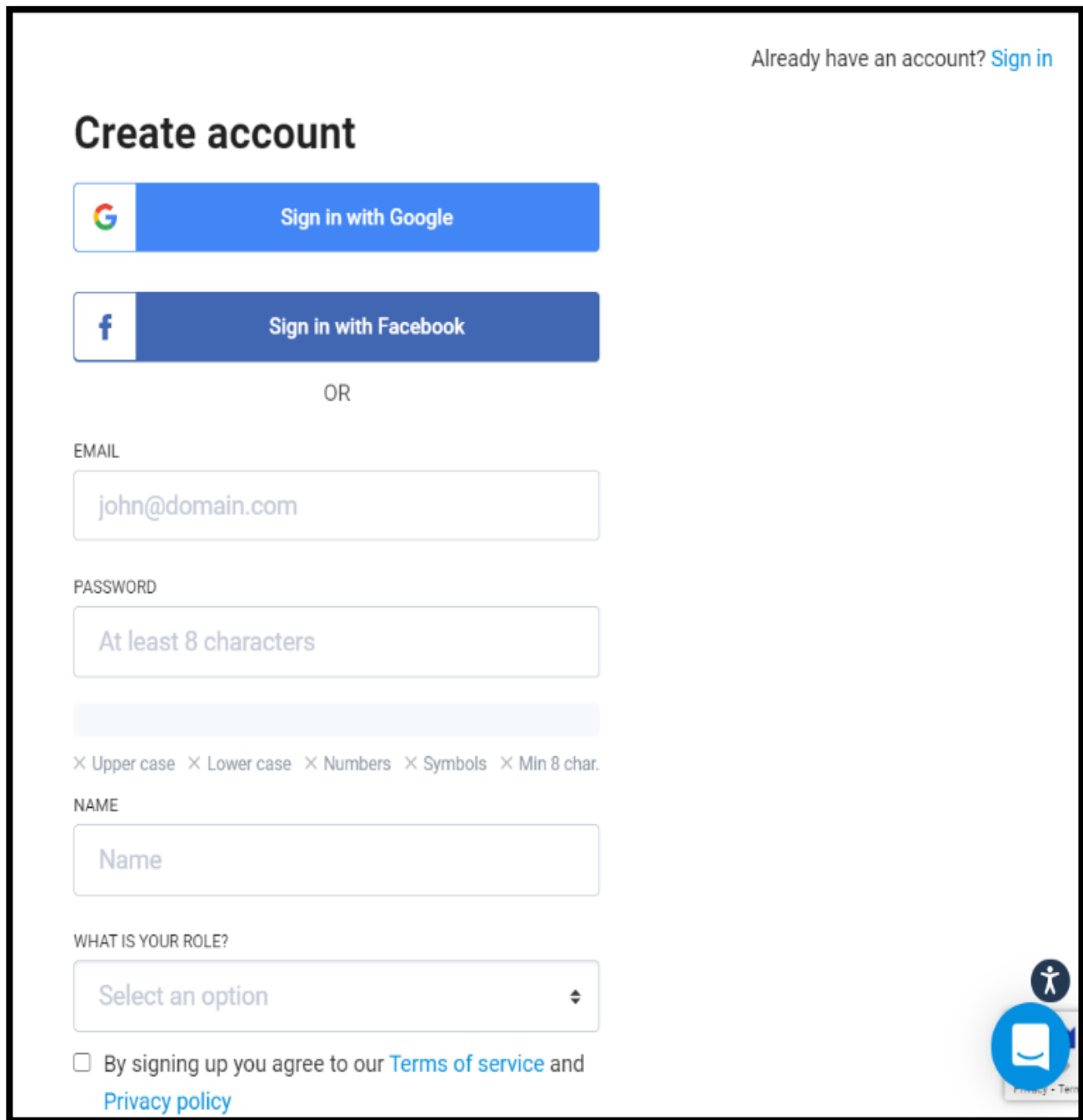
Figure 4.1: Flipsnack Home Page

The second step is to choose the best way to create an account (See Figure 4.2). I signed in with Google, but each educator is free to use the method they prefer.


Figure 4.2: Create an account

The third step is to select **"Flipsnack templates"** (See Figure 4.3), and it will open another window with multiple templates.
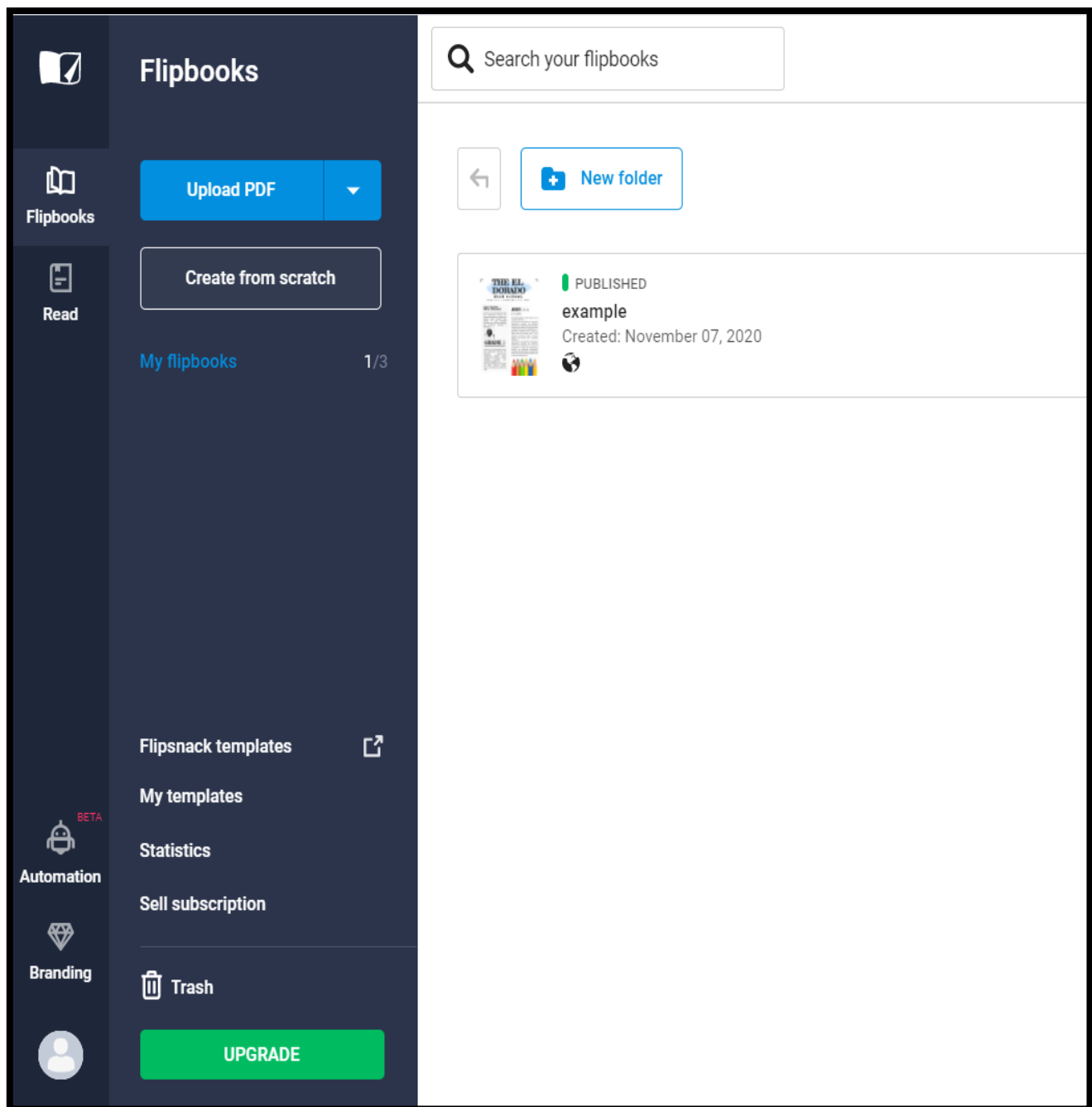

Figure 4.3: Flipsnack templates

The last part, the teacher and students can choose the newspapers **"school category"** or others according to their preferences (See Figure 4.4).
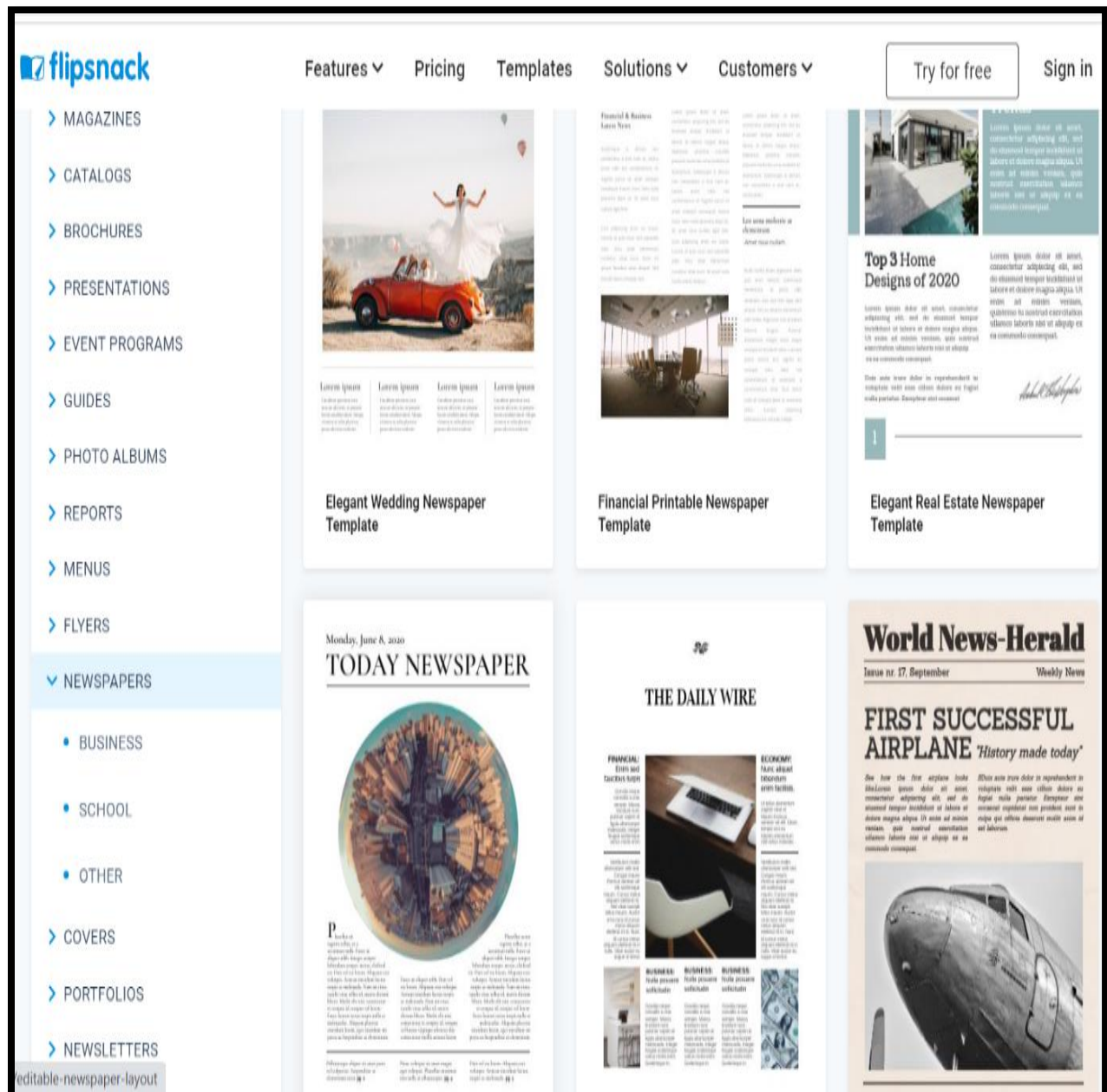

Figure 4.4: Flipsnack Newspaper templates

The bilingual newspaper was named in Spanish *Mi Mundo Bilingue*, and English, *My Bilingual World,* and the web address is https://www.flipsnack.com/blayaro/bilingual-newspaper-periodico-bilingue.html

The design of this digital newspaper was easy, which facilitated the development of it. Flipsnack allows to include amazing features such as images, gifs, hyperlinks, videos colors, among others (Figure 4.5), and the image (See Figure 4.6) shows the newspaper cover.
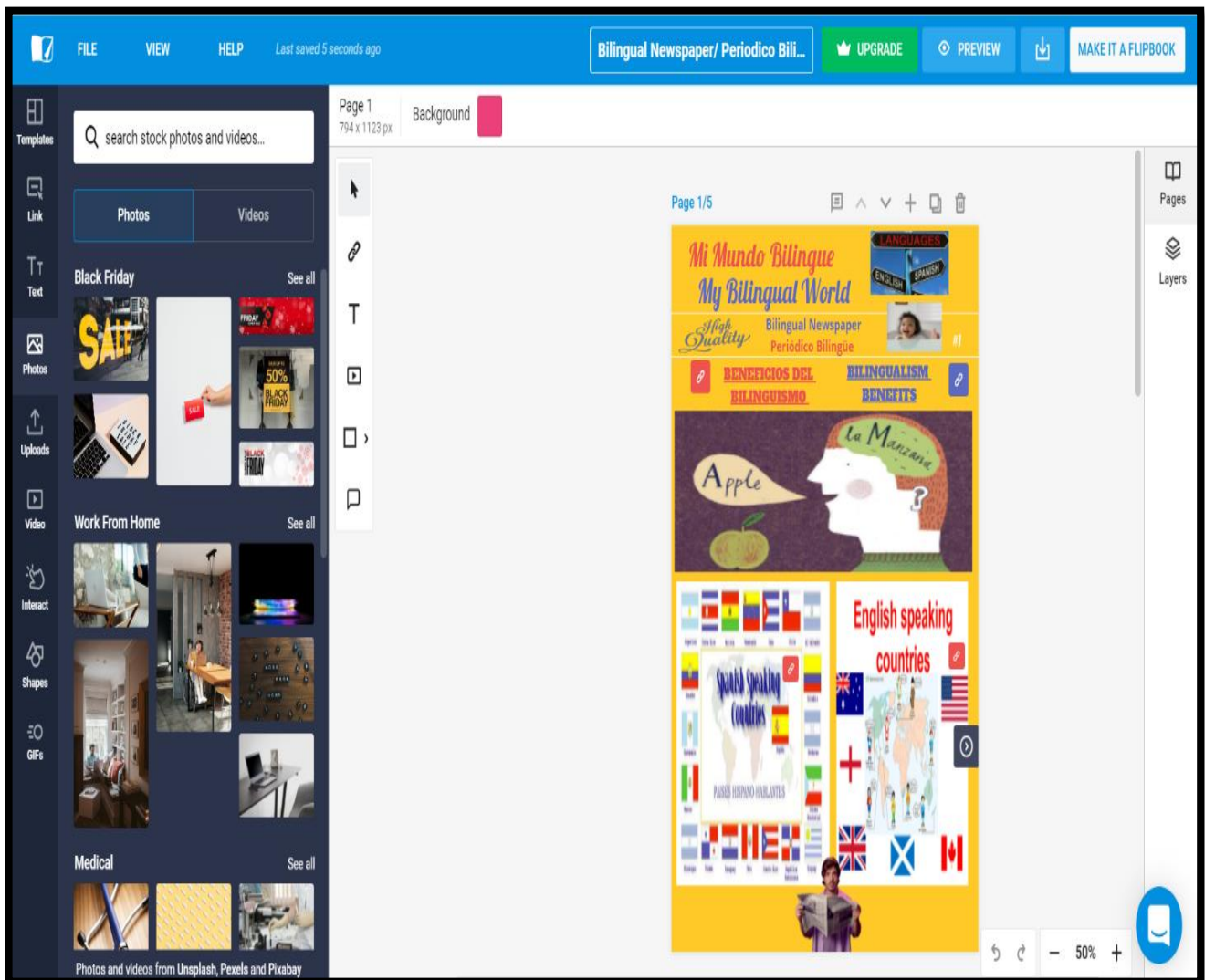

Figure 4.5: Flipsnack Features

Figure 4.6: Newspaper cover

The second and third pages of the newspaper have specific sections (food and tourism) of the American and Hispanic cultures. The information was included in Spanish (red color) and English (blue color) for getting a better comprehension of the diverse readers (See Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7: Food and Tourism Sections

The next sections are entertainment and announcements that include other colors, and in the upload sections, it is possible to add our images according to the preferences and topic. (See Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8: Entertainment and Announcements sections.

Before publishing the final project, it is necessary to go to **"MAKE IT A FLIPBOOK"** (See Figure 4.9), it is required to assign a name, and it is optional to write a description. Finally, it is done, and it is ready to be shared and seen by others.
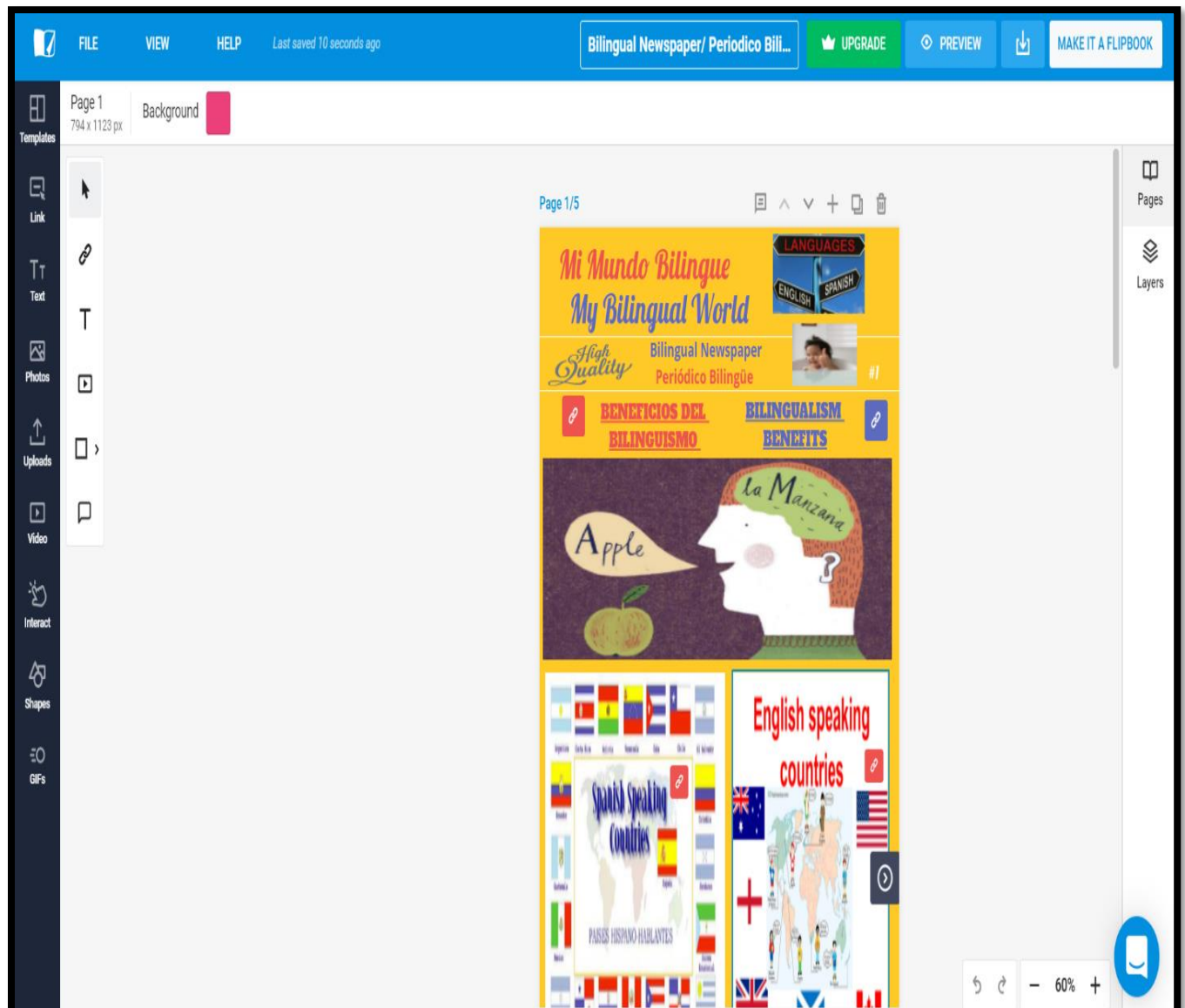

Figure 4.9: Make it a Flipbook

Chapter 5: Conclusions

In an educational world of permanent evolution, I always have considered that culture's role in learning a second language is fundamental. More specifically, as a bilingual teacher, I have felt passionate about the strong connection between language and culture. These two aspects are related and cannot be taught separately. The cultural element must be integrated into the classrooms to preserve the cultural heritage of any society. Appropriate knowledge of the people's background will help build positive relationships with others without exclusion or rejection. Effective communication will require extensive knowledge of the cultural characteristics in which a language is linked.

Moreover, it is not a secret that English educators struggle with accomplishing the tight curriculum, preventing them from including additional and dynamic activities in the class. In this way, some curriculum requirements can limit learners' opportunities to know and positively interact with other community members. I do not pretend to criticize the educative policies, but it is vital to make proper adjustments to foster cultural projects in school contexts permanently. Likewise, it is fundamental to encourage cultural differences promoting empathy towards other people. For instance, some teachers provide information about daily life, customs, or cultural patterns to better understand the classroom's diversity. If learners have positive attitudes about their home and target language and culture, then they will be more motivated to think critically and respectfully. Thus, it is necessary to incorporate a variety of socio-cultural aspects in the

lessons. Learners may acquire more cultural awareness and understand the formation and development that their languages as L1 as L2 have had through time.

For that reason, I decided to create a guide for educators to implement a new project in their English classes. This digital bilingual newspaper can be designed with all educational members' help. This pedagogical strategy is considered one of the most attractive activities in the school environments in allowing students to select daily life topics. The learners (Spanish and native English speakers) will have the opportunity to share their home and target culture simultaneously. Socio-cultural, economic, historical, or other aspects can be shown in the newspaper sections. It will depend on the teachers' directions and students' preferences. The main purpose is to incorporate it in the classroom as a didactic resource with easy access to everyone.

It was interesting to discover multiple applications during the development of the digital newspaper. Furthermore, I found how technological tools have expanded, and the educators' responsibility is to take advantage of them to facilitate the teaching-learning process. I realized the importance of motivating all learners through inclusionary activities, allowing them to share more about their background and roots without limits while fostering their creativity. Through this project, I hope that teachers can enhance their relationship with their students and be more involved in their lives. Likewise, it will be a great opportunity to promote equality and avoid the stereotypes prevalent in some educational contexts.

Undoubtedly, I wish that this activity could be implemented at any grade level because I believe it is always interesting to learn and admire different populations' culture. Each school has the autonomy to determine how the bilingual newspaper will be planned, the members who will participate, and the necessary resources for its creation. Eventually, I expect the students to acquire knowledge of their classmates' various cultures, which will reinforce respect and

acceptance as core values. In this way, they will become more effective learners and communicators in any context and language. As a suggestion, this bilingual newspaper (Spanish-English) could include other languages equitably depending on the school's needs and interests. The project aims to intensify cultural awareness and perhaps to serve as the basis for developing more welcoming programs that allow students and teachers to maintain the cultural-linguistic pride.

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